Amendments to the Specification

At page 1 before the 1st paragraph please insert the heading: FIELD OF THE INVENTION

At page 1 before the 2nd paragraph please insert the heading: BACKGROUND

At page 3 before the 1st full paragraph please insert the heading: SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

At page 4 please replace the heading "Brief description of the drawings" with: BREIF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

At page 4 please replace the 2nd and 3rd full paragraphs with the following two amended paragraphs:

Figure 2: Nucleotide sequence and corresponding encoded protein sequence of the first three extracellular domains (D1-D3) of human gp130 (sgp130 (D1-D3)), SEQ ID NO: 1 and SEQ ID NO: 2 respectively.

Figure 3: Nucleotide sequence and corresponding encoded protein sequence of human herpesvirus 8 (HHV8)-derived viral interleukin-6 (vIL-6), SEQ ID NO: 3 and SEQ ID NO: 4 respectively.

At page 5 please replace the 3rd full paragraph with the following amended paragraph:

Figure 7: Nucleotide sequence and corresponding protein sequence of the first three extracellular domains (D1-D3) of human gp130 (sgp130 (D1-D3).1), SEQ ID NO: 5 and SEQ ID NO: 6 respectively.

At page 6 before the 3rd full paragraph please insert the heading: DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

At page 7 please replace the 1st and 2nd full paragraphs with the following two amended paragraphs:

In a preferred embodiment, the polypeptide-dimer of the present invention is characterized in that at least one of said two soluble gpl30 molecules comprises the amino acid sequence as depicted in Figure 2 or 3 (see SEQ ID NO: 2 and SEQ ID NO: 4 respectively).

In a more preferred embodiment, the polypeptide-dimer of the present invention is characterized in that both of said two soluble gpl30 molecules comprise the amino acid sequence as depicted in Figure 2 or 3 (see SEQ ID NO: 2 and SEQ ID NO: 4 respectively).

At page 19 please replace the paragraph under heading "(C) Construction of spg130 (D1-D3) and spg130 (D1-D3) His expression plasmids" with the following amended paragraph:

Cloning of the ligand binding domains of gpl30 (D1-D3) was performed by amplifying the coding sequence of gpl30 from base 1 to 978 (corresponding to amino acids Met 1 to Pro 326 (Figure 2; see SEQ ID NO: 2)) by PCR according to standard protocols. pSVL-sgpl30-Fc (Atreya et al., Nat. Med. 6 (2000), 583) was taken as template. The resulting DNA fragment was purified on a 1% agarose gel, isolated by using a Qiagen MiniElute kit and cloned into the expression plasmids pQE60, pQE70 (Qiagen), pBAD/Myc-His (Invitrogen), pET-3, pET-11, pCAL-c and pCAL-kc (Stratagene).

All constructs were identified by restriction digests and the inserts were sequence verified by standard techniques.

At page 20 please replace the paragraph under heading "(E) Construction of vIL-6-His expression plasmids" with the following amended paragraph:

The cDNA for vIL-6 was amplified by PCR (coding sequence in Figure 3 (see SEQ ID NO: 3)) by using freshly isolated human genomic DNA as template. For expression of vIL-6-His in COS-7 cells the viL-6cDNA was inserted into the mammalian expression plasmids pEFllmyc-His, pUB6N5-His (Invitrogen) or pQE-TriSystem (Qiagen) in front of a polyhistidine (His) tag. For expression of vIL-6-His in bacteria vIL-6cDNA was inserted into a prokaryotic expression vector (pQE60, pQE70 (Qiagen), pBAD/Myc-His (Invitrogen), pET-3, pET-11, pCAL-c or pCAL-kc (Stratagene)) in front of a polyhistidine tag. All constructs were identified by restriction digest and the inserts were sequence verified by standard techniques.

At page 23-24 please replace the paragraph under heading "(N) Construction of sgp130 (D1-D3).1 and sgp130 (D1-D3)-Tag expression plasmids" with the following amended paragraph:

Cloning of the ligand binding domains of gpl30 (D1-D3).1 was performed by amplifying the coding sequence of gpl30 from base 70 to 966 (corresponding to aminoacids Leu 24 to Tyr 322 (Fig. 2; see SEQ ID NO: 1 and SEQ ID NO: 2)) by PCR according to standard protocols. pSVL-sgpl30-Fc (2) was taken as template. The resulting DNA fragment was purified on a 1% agarose gel, isolated by using a Qiagen MiniElute kit and cloned into an appropriate expression plasmid. For the tagged protein expression vectors comprising the appropriate tag such as His (4-6), FLAG, Step-Tag, GFP, GST, HA CBP or other epitopes to which antibodies are available were used. Alternatively, the desired tag was directly cloned behind the sgpl30 (D1-D3).1 cDNA. All constructs were identified by restriction digest and the inserts were sequence verified by standard techniques.

At page 24 please replace the paragraph under heading "(P) Construction of vIL-6-His expression plasmids" with the following amended paragraph:

The cDNA for vIL-6 was amplified by PCR (coding sequence in figure 3; see SEQ ID NO: 3) by using freshly isolated human genomic DNA as template. For expression of vIL-6-His in COS-7 cells the vIL-6cDNA was inserted into an appropriate mammalian expression plasmid in front of a polyhistidine (His) tag, e. g. pcDNA3.1/myc-His,pEF1/myc-His, pUB6/V5-His (Invitrogen), pQE-TriSystem (Qiagen) or others. For expression of vIL-6-His in bacteria vIL-6cDNA was inserted into an appropriate prokaryontic expression vector in front of a polyhistidine tag, e. g.pQE60, pQE70 (Qiagen), pBAD/Myc-His (Invitrogen), pET-3, pET-11, pCAL-c, pCAL-kc (Stratagene) or others. All constructs were identified by restriction digest and the inserts were sequence verified by standard techniques.